



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

MITT ROMNEY
GOVERNOR

KERRY HEALEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY R. MURPHY
SECRETARY

PAUL J. COTE, JR.
COMMISSIONER

September 15, 2005

Dear Colleague:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) would like to thank you for your cooperation during last year's difficult influenza vaccine supply crisis. With everyone's help, we were able to ensure that the limited doses of influenza vaccine primarily went to those at highest risk.

This year, we anticipate that the influenza vaccine will be more readily available. Sanofi pasteur is expected to supply approximately 60 million doses nation-wide, and they have already begun shipping vaccine to some of their customers. GlaxoSmithKline was recently licensed to supply influenza vaccine in the US market, and they are planning to distribute approximately 8 million doses with initial shipments going out in the next several weeks.

Chiron, the company with the manufacturing problems last season, has received a favorable review by the federal Food & Drug Administration (FDA), but still has not received final clearance on the release of its lots; should they get final clearance, they expect to distribute at least 18 million doses in the US.

Therefore, although we expect the national supply of inactivated influenza vaccine to be improved from last season, the total number of doses that will be available is still not fully known. We are confident, however, that inactivated influenza vaccine will arrive in multiple shipments throughout the season, with the last shipments arriving in November or December.

In order to ensure that those Massachusetts residents most at risk for complications from influenza are vaccinated first, MDPH is endorsing the guidelines of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the timing of administration of influenza vaccine (CDC. MMWR 2005; 54: 850), which can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5434.pdf>.

In Massachusetts and nationwide, these guidelines apply to both state-provided and privately-purchased inactivated influenza vaccine.

Therefore, until October 24, 2005, the use of inactivated influenza vaccine should be limited to the following groups:

- Children 6 – 23 months old
- Persons \geq 65 years old
- Persons 2 – 64 years old who:
 - Have chronic cardiac or pulmonary conditions, including asthma;
 - Have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year due to chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies or

- immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or HIV); or
- Have any condition (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders or other neuromuscular disorders) that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions, or that can increase the risk of aspiration.
 - Persons ages 6 months - 18 years old who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
 - Pregnant women
 - Health care workers involved in direct patient care, as determined by their institution or employer
 - Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children < 6 months old

In settings outside of the patient's medical home, patient eligibility for inactivated vaccine should be determined based on **patient self-reporting of their age and/or medical condition**. Neither physician notes nor prescriptions are necessary to verify patient eligibility, and requiring them may put an additional burden on both providers and their patients. A tool to assist with self-screening for eligibility will be provided shortly.

We anticipate that, after October 24th, eligibility for inactivated influenza vaccine will be expanded to the general public. However, large public vaccination clinics should not be held before November in order to prevent any confusion that might result from having to postpone or cancel clinics due to a delay in vaccine delivery.

Please note that there are no restrictions on eligibility for live, attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV). LAIV can and should be given to healthy people 5 – 49 years of age who wish to avoid influenza, especially health care workers and other close contacts of people at risk for complications from influenza.

MDPH is issuing Flu Advisories on a regular basis with updates on vaccine availability, recommendations and resources. These advisories, as well as other information regarding influenza and influenza vaccine, are available on the MDPH influenza website at www.mass.gov/dph/flu. In addition, the most recent information about the national status of influenza and influenza vaccine can be found on CDC influenza website at www.cdc.gov/flu.

I sincerely appreciate your cooperation, and know that together we can meet the flu vaccine needs of the residents of our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Cote, Jr.
Commissioner